

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE
EXTERNAL PROCESSOR FOR A DISTRIBUTED
NETWORK ACCESS SYSTEM

5 An external processor for a network access system having a
programmable access device includes a service controller that provides at least one
service for network traffic, a message processor that processes network messages
for service processing by the service controller, and a programmable access device
controller that programs the programmable access device in response to service
10 controller processing. It is advantageous for the external processor to include
primary and secondary service controllers for a particular service so that, if the
primary service controller fails, the secondary service controller can provide the
particular service for message received from the programmable access device. In
preferred embodiments, the service controller further includes a reporting
15 processor that provides an interface through which reporting messages received
from the programmable access device can be communicated to the service
controller and a signaling controller that transmits signals to configure network
hardware to establish requested network connections. The external processor
preferably further supports a service policy interface through which the service
20 controller can request policy decisions from a possibly remote policy server.